

PORTION CONTROL

PURPOSE: Increase awareness of food service staff on the importance of portion controls.

SCOPE: Portion control is the responsibility of not only the manager but also every employee who prepares or sells food. This includes restaurant managers, cooks, food service workers, service staff and cashiers.

GENERAL: A profitable food operation depends on many factors, all of which are the responsibility of management. They include such important aspects as menu planning, purchasing, receiving, preparation, waste prevention, and cost controls. Among cost controls, none is more vital to a profitable operation than the application and strict compliance of portion control. Unless this control is rigidly enforced by management, there will be a tendency to "guess" the correct portion; there will also be an inclination to "give a little extra," or "play safe" and give less than the correct amount. Whatever the case may be, overportioning will inevitably result in the loss of profits, while underportioning will result in customer dissatisfaction and complaints.

GUIDANCE:

Importance of Portion Control

The operational cost of sales for a food operation depends on the proper relationship of the cost of food and the sales price. The difference is the gross profit. To be certain the correct amount of gross profit is obtained, the food must be served in planned portions. Servings of larger or smaller quantities will change the results. Example: We plan to sell 4 ounces of roast beef, at a gross profit of 54 percent. If the kitchen personnel consistently serve 6 ounces, there will be a gross profit of only 31 percent. This is not enough to cover the expenses of the operation and still make a desired net profit. Standardized recipes, menu cost cards, high value inventories and the use of automated Management Information Systems such as Food-Trak will be of no consequence without corresponding portion control standards.

Who Must Control Portions

Portion control is the responsibility not only of the manager but also of every employee who prepares or sells food. This includes restaurant managers, cooks, food services, service staff, and cashiers. Each food employee in his/her work area is responsible for ensuring that the food he/she prepares or sells is correctly portioned by the use of portion standards established by management. Proper portioning requires a thorough knowledge of the standard weights required for each item and for each component of a finished product. To prepare a sandwich, for example, requires the knowledge of the exact quantities of each component that make up the sandwich.

How To Control Portions

A good deal of portion control must be exercised before the food is actually prepared or displayed for sale. This is especially true for hot food items, cold plates, sandwiches and desserts which must be portioned in the kitchen. The following are suggestions and portion control techniques:

- During food preparation, always follow recipes exactly, using portion scales and other measuring devices to ensure correct quantities.
- Always cook meats at the prescribed temperature and length of time.
- Portion as many items as possible in the kitchen before sending the food to the serving area, such as sandwich meats.
- Ensure serving utensils that correspond with your portion standards are provided (i.e., 8 oz ladle for soups and chili, or a 3 oz perforated spoon for vegetables, etc.)
- Specify garnishes to be used on standardized recipes.
- Serve entrees exactly as advertised unless otherwise specified by the customer; make substitutions only on request.
- Use dishes that correspond with the menu item that are planned to "fit" into certain dishes.
- Before each meal period, review the portion for every item on the menu with all employees involved in preparation and delivery of the menu items, include cashiers and duty managers.
- Inform cashiers (lunch line) and service staff to keep a visual check on all portions. If they appear too large or too small, management should be informed so corrective actions can be taken.
- Ensure extra portions are charged in accordance with established price lists.
- Check the menu to ensure employees know the correct price of all special dishes.
- Develop and post a list of all standard FOOD PORTION items in your kitchen.

SUMMARY:

Controlling food costs starts and ends with the proper awareness and enforcement of portion controls.